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Soviet Device May 'Listen' At Windows

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WASHINGTON, May 27. — The Russians — accused last week of hiding ears in the walls of the American embassy in Moscow — today were reported to have come up with a new spy device — the talking window.

The Soviet Union, it is believed here, has developed a thin, invisible coating which can be put on window panes. These windows and this coating would vibrate, picking up voices in a room. With a radar posted on a nearby building, the Russians could hear the conversations.

In the 11 years it took United States security men to discover the 40 Russian microphones tucked away in the embassy, the Reds have been pushing hard in the creation of intelligence sensing gadgets. These are far more sophisticated and difficult to detect than those dug out of the walls of our embassy.

Pipes Hide Gadgets

For example, besides the talking window, the Soviets also have instruments for installation in water and steam pipes.

The Russian success in stashing away the 40 mikes over the 11 years could have been prevented, electronic engineers say. But we didn't have the proper detection equipment.

The value of billions of the \$460 billion spent for national defense since 1952 could have been compromised for lack of \$500,000 more a year for research and development on counter-intelligence and security devices — including electronic and ultrasonic gadgets for detecting hidden microphones in U.S. embassies all over the world.

These funds could have been diverted from the overproduction of some types of quickly obsolescent weapons.

Competent electronic engineers familiar with defense problems have suggested in private interviews a number of devices that could be used to detect or counter Russian microphones hidden in walls as were the 40 recently discovered.

Vibrators Suggested

Among them are sophisticated ultrasonic gadgets which would detect patterns in the structure of the walls in which the microphones are hidden. Engineers say they detect "discontinuities." That is, in this case, such instruments presumably could have discovered the 10-inch holes the Russians had inserted between the microphones and the wall surfaces. Modern ultrasonic devices can be made precise enough to distinguish between such tube-like holes and ordinary cracks and other irregularities in the wall structure.

For about \$50 a room, engineers estimate, small vibrators could be installed in the walls of every office in an embassy. These small vibrators could send counter waves through the walls, garble whatever sounds hidden microphones picked up. These vibrators would not interfere with conversations. When turned on, there'd be only a slight hum in the room.

The State Department has started to rectify its problems.

Two and a half months ago it installed able, energetic C. Marvin Gentile, fresh from 11 years at the Central Intelligence agency, as deputy assistant secretary of state for security. It has been during his short tenure that the Moscow microphones were discovered by brute force; that is by tearing up the rooms.

A review of security and counter-intelligence procedures has been started. The State Department will probably ask for a step up in security research, development and production funds. Some \$4 million has been spent altogether in the past three years. The problem, government men say, is that only a small amount was spent during the previous decade to develop needed devices.

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